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30 JUN 1977

DDA
2 Jun

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

FROM: John F. Blake
Deputy Director for Administration

SUBJECT: Security of Codeword Materials

REFERENCE: DCI Memo dtd 2 June 77, same subject
(ER-77-7344/2)

1. Action Requested: None; for information only in response to your request for more information on the security of sensitive compartmented information (SCI), most often referred to as "codeword" material.

2. Background: Pursuant to your instructions, the Office of Security checked with codeword control officers at State, ERDA, DIA, Air Force, Navy and NSA on the methods of handling codeword material internally.

These inquiries developed information indicating that the procedures of handling TOP SECRET/collateral versus codeword materials are relatively uniform throughout the community. The attached substantial accounts of the comments of officers of other agencies reflect that:

a. TOP SECRET/collateral controls invariably involve more complicated record-keeping and receipting procedures.

b. There is less TOP SECRET/collateral than codeword material in all agencies queried.

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c. Codeword procedures are structured to provide an overall system for maintaining material in accredited repositories, available only to approved persons.

d. Because of the relatively larger volume of codeword material, the application of TOP SECRET/collateral receipting and inventory procedures would require considerable additional resources.

e. None of the officers queried believes that codeword procedures are being used to avoid TOP SECRET/collateral stringency. Some felt such a move could be counterproductive, in that it would preclude dissemination to those not holding codeword approvals.

f. Most of those queried thought that codeword materials are afforded a degree of security which, although achieved in a different manner, is not inferior to that provided for TOP SECRET/collateral.

g. Relatively few documents can qualify intrinsically for collateral TOP SECRET classification, as defined by E.O. 11652. Many documents, on the other hand, require compartmentation to protect sensitive aspects of technical systems for intelligence collection.

25X1 ☐ The consensus of those queried appears to be that codeword material, because of its intrinsic nature, as well as its volume, is not actually in need of nor adaptable to the detailed, individualized handling afforded TOP SECRET/collateral. Thus the current situation results, not from coincidence, but from considerations of practicality, need, and the differences in two valid approaches to security.

25X1 ☐ In the codeword systems, adherence to DCID 1/14 clearance criteria, despite variations in agency-by-agency applications, results in a relatively uniform "test of trustworthiness." Those granted approval for access to codeword information have all met criteria which are more uniform

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than those applied by the various heads of departments for access to TOP SECRET/collateral. All holders of access approvals for codeword information have undergone extensive background investigations. This is not necessarily true of all TOP SECRET-cleared personnel. For example, the Department of Defense grants TOP SECRET/collateral access to military personnel who have had ten years of honorable service, plus a National Agency Check. In these cases no background investigation is conducted. There is, in effect, a more rational basis for interchangeability, for acceptance by one agency of another's codeword clearance, because they result from a common, DCI-prescribed standard.

25X1 [] In addition, the need-to-know consideration has been predetermined, in a general way, in the codeword systems. TOP SECRET has myriad applications, and the sole criterion for need-to-know is a judgment, by the holder of the information, that the recipient does, indeed, have an official need for it. While this individual need-to-know determination must still be made in the codeword systems for specific items of information, the access approval gives assurance that the holder has an official need for at least the generic category of data held in the system.

25X1 [] There is, therefore, a far greater centralization, homogeneity and uniformity in the codeword systems than in the TOP SECRET/collateral world. The severe receipting requirements for TOP SECRET/collateral compensate, to some degree, for the lack of homogeneity. It forces a documentation of the need-to-know determination each and every time it is made. Because codeword systems deal with massive amounts of information and large numbers of people, all subject to the same clearance criteria and handling procedures, there appears to be justification for less formalized need-to-know transactions, at least with regard to individual documents. In the view of all those polled, the formalization of individual codeword document receipting would result in a serious, if not insurmountable, logjam. Nevertheless, there was unanimous agreement that there is no indication that the codeword systems are being abused by persons seeking to evade TOP SECRET/collateral procedures.

/s/ John F. Blake

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Attachment

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